

## **Economy and Transport Board – report from Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair)**

1. The start of 2014 has seen Board members lobbying hard on some of our key messages across both our transport and economy briefs. Whilst we have all been concerned about the flooding and the scale of the human cost, the Commons Transport Select Committee has been trying to learn the wider lessons from past winter conditions.
2. The Board has also started to look at economic growth and the type of jobs that might be created over coming years. I have some big concerns about whether the current national system can deliver the skilled labour we need to support new employment opportunities. Our work on future local economies is showing that the lobby for local commissioning of skills and employment support must be even stronger as the economy recovers.

### **Streetworks**

3. I was delighted to launch the LGA's joint statement with the National Joint Utilities Group of 'What Good Streetworks Looks Like' on 12 February. The statement was produced by a task force set up last year to consider how local government and utilities could work together to improve streetworks organisation and reinstatements, better inform business of works being carried out and of compensation schemes, and ensure contractors do a better job. Its membership includes LGA utility company representatives, Transport for London, the British Retail Consortium and the Association of Convenience Stores. The launch was chaired by Julian Huppert MP. It is hoped that the statement - and the fact that leading utilities and the LGA are working together - will help to drive improvement in future. The task force will reconvene in 2014 to examine the impact of our work on performance.

### **Winter Weather**

4. The weather has been and continues to be in the forefront of the news this winter. I responded to the Transport Select Committee's report into winter resilience and how councils dealt well with bad winter weather in previous years. Deputy Chair, Cllr Mike Haines, also gave oral evidence to the Committee; promoting the effective local collaboration between neighbouring authorities and their partners, the work of local volunteers, and the innovation being led by councils.

### **Skills**

5. At the last Board meeting, we had a fascinating discussion about skills, jobs and local growth, based on a report produced for the LGA by Dave Simmonds from the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI). All councils, with their business and LEP partners are getting on with the job to articulate how growth will be delivered. Using local intelligence, we are predicting sectors that will deliver growth and those which will decline. We recognise that our workforce is changing significantly and know how the

skills base needs to adapt to growth. The biggest barrier to achieving that of course is that a centralised national employment and skills system simply cannot deliver for us.

6. While the Government has acknowledged that a devolved approach to economic development is the way forward, piecemeal reform to skills and back to work support, simply is not enough. Over the next few months, we will develop our work further to set out local government's vision on how a localised system can much better deal with the issues which growth brings - so that ultimately we create local jobs, develop local people's skills, and deliver growth.

#### **Parliamentary Inquiry into Jobs for Young People in the Construction Industry**

7. I was pleased that the Vice Chair of the Board, Cllr Tony Ball, was able to provide oral evidence to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Jobs for Young People in the Construction Industry, led by Lord Best and The Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP. Cllr Ball focused on the challenges for young people during recession, and the limitations of complicated national programmes seeking to help them into work and learning. Cllr Ball also spoke about the work local authorities were doing to help young people, including in creating opportunities through local government procurement on which further evidence has been submitted to the inquiry. A final report is expected on 26 February 2014.

#### **Strategic Road Network**

8. It is essential to ensure that the Strategic Roads Network is not considered in isolation from the Local Roads Network or transportation as a whole. This is the key message that I delivered to the Transport Select Committee's Inquiry into the Strategic Roads Network on 6 January. I also spoke about the need for greater local involvement in decisions affecting the Strategic Roads Network, particularly given that the Government's own traffic estimates indicate that there will be a 43% increase in all road use by 2040. These messages were picked up by Radio 4 that evening.

#### **Transport Select Committee Inquiry on Cycling**

9. On 10 February Deputy Chair, Cllr Mike Haines, joined a panel of local government representatives to provide evidence to the Transport Select Committee's enquiry on cycling safety. Cllr Haines highlighted that local authorities have a vital role to play in promoting cycling and cycling safety through its planning role and designing good road safety, and that councils would like to do more but cuts to council budgets made it difficult to invest further. All panellists called for the commencement of Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act, enabling councils to enforce moving traffic violations, making cycling potentially safer.

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